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DESERT SANDS.

By Miss Harriett E. Prescott,
AUTHOR OF "SIR ROHAN'S GHOST"—"THE AMBER
GODS," ETC., ETC.

It is one of my bad habits to paint so long as the mask of Proteus, which hangs just under my ceiling, smiles; with the darkness, the angles fall differently, and it frowns. But always when the day fails, when the gold has reddened, and deepened, and vanished in purple, when the air is interfused with a soft, voluptuous sense that I feel as I might a new tint, be it mauve or fuchsine, when this coolness streams over my burning lids, when I scent the sweet-brier's ineffable fragrance wantoning through the place, always when this moment comes—for which the world was made—I throw down my brushes, and without pausing to clean my palette, go out.

I speak in the present—sad wretch! I, who live only in the days that are gone. It is all past, all past, with me now. Alas! and yet again alas! I paint no more.

Why am I less omnipotent than those demigods? When the curse fell for one, and heaven was blank, did numbers cease to flow? When all sound was hushed on the ear of the other, did harmonies any the less build up their great vaults in air, and melodies cease to blow through them? And I—

It should be that hour now; this sweet-brier that pranks my window gives all its breath to the damp night-wind; it is that, which steals my memory, and makes the lost mine once more. Always, at this hour, when I went out, it was to see her that I went. Eos, I called her, because I liked then to deck her in all fancies, to think of her as a bright and morning star. But loveliness like hers needed no phrases of mine—that skin, where the delicate dyes mingled as on the apple-blossom; those eyes, bluer than the violet planet! All that, indeed, was much, but when it withered, her power would be the same; she was like the lilies of eternal peace.

I did not know I loved her, if, certainly, I ever loved her—too selfish, even, to know myself. But there are seasons when all youth's blood riots in the frame and blossoms on the cheek—when the heaven-given instincts stir in the veins; and the spring that sends the sap along

the bough, sent me restlessness and longing for my part.

That night, then, as many a night before, I went to Eos. She was singing in some upper room, but came down at my demand, and sang to me. Then her sister brought in lights; and Charley had a ship to rig. How gay we were, with what names we christened her, how she served as a skeleton on which to hang all sea legends, how we enriched her with lore of the Armada and the flags of old heroic battle-ships, how perfectly we equipped her, and how we ran her little pennon at half-mast when her skipper was sent to his pillow! At last her father rose and folded up his paper.

"Eos," said he, "it is time to go to bed."

"Eos," said I, "good-night."

She came out with me, and down the little garden. We waited at the gate a moment, perhaps to penetrate ourselves with the sweet-brier's perfume, the night, and the summer stars. I had told her that I was going away shortly.

"For long?" she had asked.

"Forever," I had answered.

Then a pause; in it I listened to the crickets singing, the leaves rustling.

"I shall walk," I added, "that is the way to surprise Nature in her hiding-places. I shall camp one night on hemlock boughs, and the next on a ledge above the clouds. I shall learn the secret of forests, and hills, and sheets of falling rivers; see much, and take as I go. It will be a life almost new, as cheery as those bas-reliefs where, at every breath, you expect the pipes to blow, the flowers to fall."

"Yes," I continued, after a while, "all my pictures have sold. I have earned too much money this year. Now I shall not begin another till November, and to this old country town I shall return no more."

She did not reply. Indeed, to my speeches she frequently made no answer, but now I felt her silence like a reproach.

"And what have you to say to that?" I asked, at length.

"Nothing but good-by," she said.

"Good-by? good-by?" I repeated; "I have not thought of that. I cannot say good-by to you, Eos. I will not travel to a region without sunshine, blue sky, and universal air; without darkness, and stillness, and fragrance, and you. You must go with me, Eos."

So Eos went with me.

I am one of those who have no right to marriage-vows, in whom self-love excludes love, who find home so thoroughly in all the wide beauty of the world that they do not need one hearth, and a woman sitting by it. I said to myself, I cannot serve two masters. I did not know that in serving Eos I served God.

Of what use is regret? will it restore? Let me only remember, remember those passionate seasons when I absorbed another life into mine, and remember with savage joy and celerity.

That summer we journeyed as I had intended, except that when I walked she rode by my side. Sometimes when I climbed a crag, she waited for me at its base; again, I sketched some bold play of cloud shadows over wide intervals, and then fleeing forward to become part of the scene,

"More fleet she skimmed the plains
Than she whose elfin courser springs
By night to eery warblings,
When all the glimmering moorland rings
To jingling bridle-reins."

Yet always she came circling back to me, like the moth to its flame. She was blithe as birds at dawn, airier than glancing foam-flakes are; she took, like a prism all the white rays of happiness into her bosom, and sparkled them out in rainbows on those about her. When the autumn came, we went into a country ripe with color, while the year set like the sun. All this time my art had been in abeyance, I had found that life was something different from my thought; Eos was my wife, this summer I was a bridegroom; for a brief three months, at least, I loved as I was loved. One day I opened my easel, chalked my sketch, and then went out alone. Returning, I held clearly the thing that I would paint, the fine, keen drawing, the clarity of tint, the strength of color; I took my brushes and worked. The next day and another I did the same; nothing came of it; the old inspiration failed, my hand was powerless, my secret lost, my fancy dead. I said, "Life has been too rich, it has impoverished art; that shall cease." That did cease.

In the evening, as I stood at the window, silent and resolved, Eos came and crept again into my arms; I suffered her to remain, but I did not tighten my clasp, give her kiss or caress, or call her by any new endearing name. It was hard at first, that once it was hard, afterward it cost me no such effort, and became habit. It

is true that now and then, when south winds blew, when some divine day melted in heaven, youth and love returned to me, my heart expanded in their warmth, passion wrapped me in its cloud, and I sought Eos. She was always there, she never swerved from following me. Before the close, such days only plunged me deeper in the intoxication of their own beauty, only bent me more earnestly to my purpose. It may be that I should have suffered her to help me, that she should have mounted with me step for step; but she could not, she kept me at her level. I was right; I knew that I was right; when I had attained, I should have turned to her again. She was not strong enough to wait, and so the game was lost.

In November, we went to the city. I said to her, "One must not be niggardly. You shall go home awhile now, they have never been so long parted from you before. I can spare you."

Perhaps, but for that last sentence she would not have gone. As it was, she hesitated, and seemed to forbode evil. Then I lost no time in putting myself at work. But, before the third week of her absence, I found that all was useless without her. I needed her, she must be about me, she must, in fact, give all and receive nothing. I brought her back.

On arriving at her father's house that evening, I could not but contrast the cheer with the forlorn place I had left—for then I was not rich; the crimson shadows, the sparkling firelight; they had a warm welcome for me, for they knew nothing of my conduct, and, indeed, what was there to know, I asked myself; Eos was not unhappy, she had a woman's quick perception, saw its necessity, and adapted herself to it. Once in the evening, when we were alone a moment, she came and said:

"I did not expect you; I am surprised. I thought you could spare me."

"No," I replied, "I cannot have you away. Eos, you are my sun, the light in which I live. How *did* I live before I knew you, love?"

She laid her cheek upon my arm, the dumb caress touched me, and I stroked her hair; so rare had any expression on my part become, that the least now thrilled her with a timid joy, I think.

"Do you know," said she, "I had begun to feel as if it were all a dream, to fancy that the little glimpse of different

life, this summer's snatch of delight, was something I had slept through, that I was not your wife, but just Eos here at home."

I started; that must not be; least of all, now that her cousin Alain was here again, he whose relationship allowed a brother's freedom with her, and who, by his quick eye and traveller-instinct, would tell at a glance how things lay.

"Ah?" I said lightly, "has it reached that; Eos at home away from me? But you *are* my wife, you know, and to-morrow we will go."

"No," she said, lifting her head, "to-morrow I shall not go. I wish to stay a day longer."

"Eos with a will of her own?" I replied now, amused at the phenomenon. "I have half the mind to indulge it, and see where the caprice ends."

Just then Alain entered. I kept my arm round Eos till she withdrew and took her work. Alain found some charts and began to examine them; he would shortly leave for Algiers, to join his father's regiment there, for on one side he was of French extraction, and the knowledge of the dangers and monotones in the life he was henceforward to lead, caused every one's manners to wear an additional air of kindness in his regard. As I looked at him now, I acknowledged that his was the most faultless face I had ever seen; had I been a figure painter, I could have asked no greater boon than perpetual companionship with such beauty; as it was, to have seen him once was to have seen him too often. He had that air of easy command, that gracious coolness which carries everything before it. I saw at once that through my error all was in train for a catastrophe. We would go to-morrow, I thought; not an instant would we delay; no wonder she wished to stay; this man, with his seducing graces, could win a saint from heaven—and it was not heaven from which Eos was to be won. Then I became aware that I was possessed of jealousy. I had hoped such a possibility was over, and could scarcely remember the time in which I had been so utterly displeased with myself. In revenge, I was on the point of allowing her the desired day; the wounded fiend turned in my heart at the thought, and whispered, "In that day, watch!" I strangled it with a death-grip.

"Eos," I said, "I have business in the next town, and you have two days more at home."

But, had my life depended thereon, I could not hinder myself from hastening through my affairs, and back again. Still, however, I did not immediately seek the house, but returned there only after a long walk, undertaken to subdue this last spark of the heart's rebellion. It wanted yet an hour to sunset; I turned the handle of the parlor-door and entered noiselessly. An easel stood beside the window, before it, with stick and palette, sat my wife; Alain was by her side.

"Will he be pleased?" asked she. "It is finished, but is it fine?"

I stole behind them, and looked at the canvas. A cliff, yet blue in heavy night-shadows, was rent apart, and in the rift a brook—a thread of limpid water—crept down and curled from reach to reach to lose itself in dimness; a tuft of long bearded grass, half-guessed, bent forward and shook its awns in a wind; a young birch, shivered with the tremors of its perpetual joy, half way up on the other side; and in a sky of dark and tender twilight, the morning star hung, and tricked her beams in the stream below. For an instant I could not detect the faults; nothing that I had done equalled it.

"It is perfect!" I exclaimed.

Eos started, sprang to her feet, and hid her face in my cloak. Alain grasped my hand.

"You are noble, Ruy Diaz!" said he (for so they often travestied the first syllable of my name), "I beg your forgiveness for having feared your surprise would not be so agreeable. You humble me!"

I bent back Eos's head and kissed the blushing forehead for reply. Nevertheless, he was wrong. I was not pleased. I did not love Art well enough to give my wife to it; I did not want a rival in her; above all, I could not have her sacred name on everybody's lips. She was mine, not theirs. Had I kept her apart and hidden, veiling her when she went out, always accompanying her, scarcely suffering her existence to be known, now to hear other men discuss her merits and demerits, and slime her with their praise? What an enigma I present to my own understanding! I loved her only as a part of myself. I allowed her no integral life.

"No fault to find?" asked Eos at length.

"Oh, yes," I answered, "doubtless there are plenty. I could tell you there is no composition, color crude, sentiment too intense. But to what use?"

"To improve me."

"Well, and if I do not wish to improve you, sweet? Whose picture is this?"

"It is mine," said Alain, entrenched in his former suspicion. "She has given it to me."

"And what do you design to do with it, may I ask?"

"Certainly. I shall exhibit it at Dash and Blank's."

"I shall be extremely displeased at any such course."

"So I thought," said Alain dryly.

"But you are mistaken. Nothing can give me greater pleasure than this discovery. I am rejoiced to find in my wife a kindred soul; genius gives her new links to me, art seals her mine indeed. She is nearer and dearer because of this immortal flame in her spirit. I am glad, darling," I said, folding her closer, "and is not my joy enough?"

"It is enough!" said Eos fervently, clinging to me.

And so the picture was never shown.

That evening, as Eos busied herself with her needles and her skeins of brilliant worsteds, and Alain was intent upon his charts again, I drew near the table and took up a little book of French sentiment, that bore his pencillings.

"What balderdash," I exclaimed; "any woman could have told him better. Eos, what is it that a woman loves best in a man?"

"His selfishness," said Alain, without looking up.

"No," replied Eos, "not exactly, not at all. But a certain self-poise, something that convicts her of the fact that he can do without her."

"And is that what you find in me?" I asked.

"Could you do without me?" she replied archly, and with the smile that, when she was happy enough to shed it, always brought me to her feet. I could reply only with my gaze; never had I been so conscious of my love as at that moment, of my need of her, of her grace, her sweetness, her perfection; my whole soul trembled in my eyes to meet her own. She must have been aware, and yet she refused to look up, and bent but the lower over her needles. Alain rose and left the room for dividers. I resolved to lift those mutinous lids and gain the glance that was surely beneath. For a moment she remained motionless, then slowly raised her head and suffered me to

see that tears streamed over the face. Instantly I was beside her.

"Eos," I exclaimed, "what is it?"

She dropped the work and threw her arms about me.

"Oh, I fear that you *could* do without me, I know that you *could*! I already oppress you! I wish I were dead!" she cried, sobbing convulsively.

"Darling," I murmured, "in the day you died, I, too, should cease to live."

Still she clasped me, still wept.

"What shall I do, Eos," I asked, "to convince you how dear you are?"

"Only forgive me now," she murmured, with fresh grief.

I heard Alain's step. "You are weak and nervous," I said, as I felt myself shaken with the violence of her emotion. "You have applied too closely of late. And, Eos, I do not wish to grieve you, but you must control yourself, such outbursts, such vehemence, are not at all to my taste."

At the word, she rebounded like a steel spring, and hardly was she in her seat before Alain re-entered.

The next day, remembrance of the last evening's disturbance effaced, we returned to the city. For four months I worked breathlessly; every day, when Eos had finished her little household cares, she came and sat near me; is it strange that the work was beautiful, when so constantly she sent her soul into it? In the evenings we went out, down the damp streets—snow or rain or whistling east—shooting along the slippery pavements, she and I together, in the light of flaring gas and the great squares of color, amethyst, ruby, and emerald, spread from the chemists' windows. Sometimes I left her for a club, or a play, sometimes we both needed music. I had my aim in the world; I was reaching it. Whether I were happy or not did not occur to me, whether Eos were happy or not I did not pause to ask. It was then that I first saw Vespasia.

One February morning Eos had not yet come in, some one mounted the stair and knocked: it was a footman with the card of Mrs. Dean Vivian. Immediately on his departure, another step followed, and Mrs. Dean Vivian herself entered.

She was an imposing woman, not so much through height as proportion, neither in the splendor of her array—though that was considerable, and was necessary to such a face—so completely as in the

grace which rendered it, unlike that of so many women, merely an accessory.

"If I may command your time, Mr. Sydney," said a voice that I could compare to nothing but the mellow sweetness of a too-ripe pear, as her skin to the soft and smooth gold-brown of the *beurré*, illumined as it was by the sinister contrast of eyes wearing the lustre and almost the tint of emeralds. "If I may command your time, Mr. Sydney," and the smile that always accompanied her words broke up the face into vivid beauty, "I wish to examine your portfolios and to order a pendant for your 'Mist on the Meadows,' which I lately purchased."

"My time is at Mrs. Vivian's service for an hour, after that I regret an engagement," I stated, for it is always best to meet such imperious dames on their own ground. The manner had the desired effect.

"Perhaps then, another day would be more opportune," she said.

"Not at all," I replied, wheeling a rack toward her. "Be seated, and allow me." She sank into a chair, sweeping her violet draperies about her, and turned the sheets.

"An effect of Kearsarge in cloud," I said rapidly. "Rainbows in Pemigewas-set valley, spray at Appledore, Montmorenci, seen from—"

"Yes," said she, detaining it, "that is well arrested; curled in foam, a fleece upon the azure. Why do you not elaborate it?"

"Some day I may." I opened another portfolio. "These are studies," I added, "attempts at sentiment rather than scenery. I have fused and inwrought them with the spirit of the line which they illustrate. God's own profound; the melancholy main; Ariel fetching dew, by midnight, from the still-vexed Bermoothes."

Mrs. Vivian surveyed each with the swift eye of a connoisseur, noted its points, and passed to the next. Soon she leaned back in her chair, and folded her hands. "Ah, well," said she, "you would certainly play the showman till I went, if permitted."

"Excuse me. I am merely condensing your time, madame," I responded.

"Oh, I thank you there; but I knew the artist well enough before, and in his works. It seemed to me that I should like to make acquaintance with the individual. Am I too presuming?"

"I can assure Mrs. Vivian that only as

the artist should I repay her trouble," I answered sincerely enough, for my experience taught me that I had already, in theory, abjured my human side.

"We shall see," she replied, so coolly that I was nettled.

"And it is only as the artist that I care to be known," I added.

"Making headway famously," she exclaimed, with a low laugh. "Ah, Mr. Sydney, I always succeed! If portraiture were your branch, I should sit to you for a child of the sun—I am East Indian by birth—as it is, I shall be your guest continually while my picture proceeds, and you must be mine when it is hung. Are such orders, such visitors, unwarrantable?"

"Such orders are frequent enough, such visitors rare."

"I see you can be genial, on occasion. That gives me heart to beg your company at dinner next week; some beautiful women, some sparkling wits, some poets, and men of your sib."

"It is impossible, thank you. I cannot infringe upon my rule even for such excitement."

Here Mrs. Vivian rose and sailed slowly about the room, scrutinizing its arrangements; pulling aside a fragment of gold brocade that hung from the arm of an antique and swept the floor, she extended her long arm, brought out an object from its screen, and inspected it.

It was a spot of swamp where the rhodora grows in leafless bloom, and the purple blossoms crowding the place, danced on the tips of their long stems like a swarm of brilliant insects late lit from southern gales, waving their antennæ, rustling their wings, eager and tremulous for fresh flight. It bore as motto, written in delicate characters beneath, the line:

"In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes."

"I must have it," she exclaimed. "It is dainty and matchless, quite out of your style. Is the price fixed, Mr. Sydney?"

"It has no price, madame."

"But you will arrange one? Pray don't hesitate;" and she named enormous sums.

"The thing is a trifle," I replied, "not worth a fraction of what you mention. Nevertheless, I cannot part with it."

"But my heart is set upon it. Pardon me—I am rich."

"You are not rich enough to buy it."

"Then it is of value to you—not your

handiwork, perhaps? Whose then? May I ask the artist's name? Who painted this exquisite bit?"

I was more annoyed than I could express, dropped my palette and pencils with a clang, stooped to collect them, and then, as she still paused for a reply, gave one:

"My wife."

"Ah!—I had heard—I was scarcely aware—;" and here she ceased, in order to examine the picture anew.

Mrs. Vivian owed her usual success, as many others do, to a want of delicacy.

"Well, sir," said she, "your wife can paint you another, as for me—" and she held it at arm's length while gazing.

I took the picture from her hand, as if she had wished to relinquish it, and restored it to its former place. She shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"I shall see that wife, Mr. Sydney, never fear, and engage her good services on my own behalf. In what seclusion she is cloistered. Is she from Stamboul? Do you keep a seraglio? . . . Then you will not dine with me?" she added, rising, and fixing the glittering eyes upon me.

"I deplore my inability."

"Which means that you could if you chose." She paused a moment before my easel, and adventurously raised the curtain. "Shall I tell you what satisfaction I find in your work?" she said. "If one must link Emerson's sentences with chains of their own logic, and if Shakspeare leaves always room for your imagination, some painters possess the same great quality. In wondering at the boldness of your effects, I remember how Beethoven 'permitted' consecutive fifths."

She dropped the curtain and moved on.

"I shall do myself the honor of calling upon Mrs. Sydney, shortly," she continued, as a work-basket caught her eye.

"I thank you, but Mrs. Sydney does not receive calls," I replied.

She laughed, and the flash of white teeth completed her extremes of color. At the door she paused to disturb a pile of pencil-drawings.

"Wood-scenes? Illustrations?" she said. "Ah, Byron's Dream, I see. You comprehend so various manners, from fresco to missal! Have you ever seen a missal, by the way?"

"Never."

"No? I have one, a gorgeous little thing, the work of Attavante, the Floren-

tine. I shall have pleasure in placing it at your disposal." And, resting her perfectly gloved hand in mine a moment, she bowed, smiled, and was gone.

In the afternoon I received a parcel, with Mrs. Dean Vivian's compliments. It was the missal, in a case of carved sandal-wood. Within was written, in faded ink: "Vespasia, Rome," and a date of some ten years before. She was then probably far my senior, and while looking at it, it seemed to me that my morning's guest had been some creature of the old Latin reign, and that the seal dropped from her chatelain had its device: *Væ Victis*, in her native tongue.

To the surprise of Eos, I left everything for the examination of this treasure—its arabesques, its floral wealth, its grotesque and brilliant fancies, its colors that defied time. At length I put it in my pocket and went out. I walked far; it was impossible to return till the mood that was on me should be past. I could not keep my thoughts away from the superb thing that had that morning filled my vision—from the serpentine grace, the splendid hues, the daring, dazzling manner; it was new, and fascinated like a vision of Lamia. I might have thought that my overwrought fancy had belied me, but the casket of spicy wood that enclosed the precious fardel lay under my hand, and was actual. This woman seemed to me some oriental creature of fire and strength, and not in herself so much as in her suggestion. I was charmed. All the old Eastern dream of my youth—picture of palm-tree and desert—wrapped me at remembrance of her. When I returned home, at twilight, Eos was sleeping in a chair by the grate; a book had slipped from her hand to the floor; it was the "Arabian Nights." I took it; and as I read by the flickering flame awhile, the spell grew deeper; I saw Damascus' gardens of delight, Cairo's streets of grottoed shadow, the stainless sky of Philoë, the Nile mystery of mysteries. I wondered how I had endured life with this pale phantom of a woman; I cursed the dense and crowded air. The sting was upon me, henceforth; though I lingered, my tent was struck.

Day followed day now, and yet I achieved nothing. Eos saw that some trouble oppressed me; she could not become sweeter than before, but she made me feel her sweetness more, and she lavished such vital force as she possessed in

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counteracting the fatal influence; but what spell, what magnetism, could so feeble a nature exercise against the all-potent one of that jewel-eyed enchantress? She endeavored to soothe me with her quiet, to cheer me with her sunshine; she sang to me almost constantly, since frequently, when my sense of color became involved, fine tints, clear contrasts, rich combinations, unrolled themselves to my thought at her singing voice. She twined fresh vines about the casts; she brought in her camellia bush, mooned and cresseted with spotless blossom; she heaped vase and shell with mounds of snowy bloom: the only odor, that faintly distilled from some pure and dewy-cool moss rose. It was all in vain. The first time I went to Vespasia's, the house reeked with the insidious perfume of a daphné tree.

Vespasia came also to me. She begged me not to cease work, and found herself a seat. I obeyed; for beneath her eyes I felt a power, not my own, flow through my fingers and enrich my canvas. While I worked, I recognized her will, her magic, as she reclined in the low chair behind me; I submitted to her ordination, to the influx of foreign force; my creations grew instinct with loveliness, the color spilled ripe and profuse from my pencil. A door opened, and Eos, unaware, stepped down. I hesitated, looked at her, and thought of St. Lucia bearing light to the blind; my line faltered, my hand remained palsied, as it were: so might a Madonna confront the Venus of Titian. She welcomed the other in distant courtesy, but continued standing by the easel, firm, mild, and with, so to say, a gentle diffusive influence; they were antagonists, and Vespasia retreated.

Vespasia came to my studio no more, but not once or twice only did I seek her, it became a constant custom. Every evening I was her guest, by her side I heard all choice music, her lips persuaded with honeyed eloquence, her presence was a cup of intoxication, she was an adept in all ravishing arts. Did I then love her? No; I loved Eos as far as I could love at all; but Vespasia's boundless beauty, with its strange tone, her luxurious habit, her sumptuous surroundings, her prodigality of spirit, and person, and array, were like some rich oil that fed the flame of my genius till nothing seemed impossible to me. But for the other—did she keep watch

and wait? did her cheek grow pale, her eye restless? did she gather greater quiet and more enduring patience? In all this weary while, what became of Eos?

One night I was with Vespasia at the opera. She was magnificent; she was very gay, I fancy, also; but though I kept my gaze fixed on her, I listened only to the music. As the curtain fell on the first act of *Der Freyschütz*, her eyes flashed, for an instant, toward the opposite portion of the house, and then I saw that she was exerting all her charms to retain my attention. Following a furtive glance thrown again at the same point, I met that of Eos. She was white and radiant, her eyes darkened and glittering. Beside her sat Alain. I excused myself for a few moments, and joined her.

"Eos?" I said. "And here? I left you at home, I thought."

"Certainly you did," said Alain, in a low tone, before she could reply. "I arrived in your absence, and saw that the first thing she needed was diversion; and the next, a journey, which I hope to be able to persuade her to take, and to take in the direction of her old home."

I bent across Eos, so that none but he could hear me:

"M. Ducheneœur knows, perhaps, the price of such interference?" I murmured.

"And always meets his obligations," was the reply, with an indignant glance.

I offered Eos my hand, she rose, and we stepped into a coach at the vestibule. I did not suffer her to sit aloof, but held her in my arms, cheek to cheek. Perhaps I thought she understood me, perhaps I did not care. I left her in the studio, re-entered the coach, drove furiously back, and rejoined Vespasia as the curtain rose again. I was more disturbed than I wished should appear. I was half aware that some dream was broken, but turned and composed myself anew, like one who wished to continue it. Perhaps nothing could have aroused my attention, and therefore calmed me, sooner than the terrible diablerie of this drama, while its music was like a soothing hand on weary eyelids. I was again in the atmosphere of this regal woman, again breathing her magic, stilled in her affluence; again at the breath of horn and flute, with the chord of braided harmony—all soft and grateful color swathed me. I went home with Vespasia; others were there, the rooms were ringing, I stood shrouded in a curtain and looking out. There were the

pavements, wet with spring rain, and shining in the light. There was a woman, with her shawl wrapped closely about her, leaning against the lamp-post, her white face bent upward, and covering the window with such a gaze as that with which a tigress protects her young; she had no significance for me—I was wrapped, remotely, in a mist of bewilderment and sense. Then the others went, the lights fell, there was only a luminous blush in the place from behind rosy transparencies. Vespasia floated on toward me; I left the curtain, and sat at her feet.

"Do you remember," said she, "how the Fay Vivien bound Merlin?"

I did not reply, too involved in the enjoyment of delicious fancy. Her arm was upon my shoulder; I was conscious of her form bending above me, of the bunch of geraniums and lemon-leaves that blazed upon her bosom and loaded the air with superabundant sweetness, of her breath sweeping my cheek. I heard a voice that seemed to issue from a cloud, in one swift murmur:

"Sydney, do you love me?"

A thorn of the sweet-brier bud which I had taken from Eos, stung my hand. I did not look at Vespasia, but rose and walked from the room, from the house, out into cool night air, sleet, and wind, and freedom.

Reaching home, I sought Eos. She was neither in the studio nor elsewhere; she was not to be found. A wild suspicion crossed me; I leaped down the stairs to the door; something lay under the shadows of the porch, head drooping, arm outflung; it was she. I carried her in and summoned assistance. She was in a heavy stupor; with the morning, in high fever. Standing by her bedside, I did not remember our words of the evening before, when Alain entered.

"Too late, as I feared," he said impetuously. "You succeed beyond my anticipations. I thought you had only broken her heart, and it seems you have taken her life!"

I could not care, just then, for anything he might say. "Hush!" was all I answered.

He looked about the room; its appointments were chaste and costly enough. "Yes," he murmured, "you become opulent, or hold the talisman to be so. Your work commands enormous amounts; one stroke of the brush fills the purse—

but all your gold is coined from her heart's blood!"

"It has not been at my option to do other than I have done," I replied, somewhat moved.

He laughed in his low-mocking way. "They are all alike," he muttered; "from Attila to Sydney, they are all the scourge of God, the instruments."

I put my hand upon his shoulder and pointed at the door. I was roused, and my eyes must have flamed.

He glanced back at Eos, and turned. "No," he said, "I shall remain; she is almost my sister, she will need me, too."

"She needs no one," I exclaimed in the same suppressed tone; "she has me."

"She will not have you long, the fit will pass, and revert to your oil-tubes and pencils," he replied coolly. "Well, I will stoop so much and ask it: let me stay."

So he stayed. She was ill long; so soon as delirium and danger were past, I resumed my painting; I had orders to fill, and ideas to elaborate. I was fortunate beyond thought; I had never so nearly brought my performance to the level of my conception. Weeks passed swiftly, the night went, the summer was upon us. Alain, who, it may be, began to see that any other than the course which I had pursued was impossible with me, remitted his hostility. More faithful and careful than a watch-dog, he followed Eos, wheeled her sofa into the studio, lifted and held her that she might see me work, recounted to her incidents of my fame, sang to her, read to her, ransacked the markets for dainty fruits—pomegranates from Florida, granadillas, all glowing and gorgeous infiltrations of tropical sweetness and wealth. When the twilight came, at close of our wedding-day, I took her in my arms and walked with her till she slept. Alain, meanwhile, neglected none of his studies; he read us his father's letters, and his conversation, when best pleased, was chiefly of his future home in the East. At the word, all the old fire flashed up in my veins, again the desert-mania, the pyramids, the eternal sands.

At last Alain bade us farewell for years; he was to take the Arabia. Eos was restored, and on the day of his departure, we went into the country by the seashore. Worn with watching and close application, my eyes troubled me, and Eos, in the hours when sketching was abandoned, read aloud; the book she happened on was "Eothen;" as she proceed-

ed, the fascination became like the eye of the basilisk, drawing me eastward; I bade her exchange it, and she found "Vathek;" she repeated to me Fatima, and she sang to me a strange German song of Sand. When I walked by the shore again, the imperious longing seized me; my fancy travelled along this vast level of calm seas to find the loneliness it coveted, but not the fertilizing heat, the languor, the wild, strange life; bitter salt and cold was the sea. The desire rose unbidden, perpetually, it lingered against my wish, it became morbid, and goaded me like gadfly of Io. I was not ready for extended travel yet. America I recognized as the prime school of landscape; I had a principle in the thing, and wished to drain the cup at my lips ere turning to the lees of that drained centuries ago; moreover, I feared lest originality should vanish before the overpowering vitality of that old land, and I fall into mere worship. So, after a time, we went back to the city, and so for three years I plodded on. It was not like the weary plodding of others, there was never failure, always satisfaction, always an interior and intense joy, a joy over the beauty that was in the universe, and my mastery thereof, that was a perennial intoxication of triumph. Thus these three years were a season of ideal revelry; at their close I possessed myself in more strength than ever heretofore, and still the earth revealed to me her secrets. Still, while I wore deeper and deeper the grooves of my orbit, Eos waited on me pale and patient as a satellite, other than so, she saw I did not need her; she spoke little, she smiled only on me, at my day and night absences she made no word of remonstrance, she allowed me to find pleasure where I might, convinced that all was but the nutritive compost required to bring the germs of thought into blossom on my canvas; she became impervious to jealousy, once capable of anger—albeit, angry as a dove's wing makes lightning—such a thing could no longer strike a spark from her sensation; no indifference, or neglect, or wrong, wrung from her complaint, all suffering had found its ebullition in the night preceding her illness: she was Eos still, but without the spirit. There grew in her eyes that look of desolation to be found in those of so many a tutelary saint; I remembered when they were bluer than the gentian, and sparkled with perpetual sunshine.

It was the third summer since Alain had left us; we went to the mountains this year, and with Eos at my hand, I ranged them again. There was hardly a crevice in their old seamed sides which I did not know. I knew where the black bear kept his den, and where the snakes coiled, and hissed, and bred; in the clouds, upon their summits, I had been wrapped, in their valleys, stifled. It was a different life that I wanted, a different race of men from these stolid mountaineers; I wearied of the pastoral—the shining armaments of war, the spear, and the bit, were flashing ever before me—my mind made pictures that this cold North could never realize.

One day, at dinner, there were some fresh arrivals, and, in the course of making acquaintance, the conversation became personal.

"That reminds me," said one. "Do you know Mrs. Vivian?"

"Dean Vivian's widow?"

"I suppose so, somebody's widow; wealthy, superb eyes like broken bottle-glass."

"Oh, very well."

"You know, then, that she has left Europe?"

"I was not aware that she had been there. When will she arrive?"

"I believe the passage is not long from Marseilles to Alexandria. She will *never* arrive in America, she has forsworn it, and returns to the East."

"Indeed! That is a great loss."

"Yes, in some respects. It is better, on the other hand, to have every object fulfil its destiny; hers was not in civilization. She always appeared, in my object-glass, like some savage thing panting with restraint: one of those desert-creatures, full of wary, feline instincts, ready to throw off mask and sheathe the claws in the desired prey. Ah, sir?" turning to me.

"Not at all," I replied, "she seemed to me eminently human. I fancied there had been Roman women like her."

"Impossible! That is because you misapprehend, and are led astray by her name. I remembered, when I used to see her, the beautiful Ghoul whom the Arabian prince married unawares, the genie and great fairy with woman-faces and ophidian extremities. Yes, her very gait, if you ever noticed, was not like that of most stately females, it was sinuous or sidelong, never attaining any mark by a straight line; and, upon my soul! it

would not be hard to take the rustle of her silks for hissing. Just imagine the transformation as Keats has done. See the

" ' Gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermillion-spotted, golden, green, and blue,
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barred,
And full of silver moons, that as she breathes
Dissolve, or brighter shine.' "

The very Egyptian serpent, slipping among the arid, sparkling wastes of sand; I expect yet to see some of her victims set their heel upon her head. Well, it is gratifying to have any substance acknowledge its magnet, and Mrs. Vivian takes to the sun rarely. It allows hope that, by-and-by, all the extraneous will filter off, and leave only, in a millennial world, the pure ore, that is to say, you and I, sir, and little madame here!" With which he bowed to his wife, and built a ditch and glacis in her salt-cellar, while waiting for desert.

"After such a harangue, my dear," said the lady, "your auditory will suspect you of being one of the victims."

"I shall disown the 'soft impeachment.' My auditory know my specialty; I do not paint pictures, I paint characters."

"It is not Mrs. Vivian's character so much as her personal suggestions, that you have sketched," I interposed.

"And they *are* her character precisely, taking the parallax into account. You know, sir, that the way to see a star best is not to look at it directly."

Here Eos rose, and I was glad to follow. We wandered all the afternoon, and came at length upon a wet spot where the scarlet cardinals grew. As I plucked and Eos twined them in her hat, I looked up the great rock that towered behind, and put my hand upon its stained face, unheated by all the August sun. I surveyed the narrow valley, the unyielding barrier of mountains that enclosed me, the pale sky that stretched cold and thin above me; I gathered another handful of the cardinals, and thought of great African lilies, of skies brimmed with inexhaustible azure that contrast with the angles of a tent gives violet tinges deep as the lees of claret. I felt oppressed by the great dumb life crowding upon me, I wished to push the gigantic flanks aside, I longed for a sparkle, a rush; solid, and heavy, and immobile, I desired the slight, and capricious, and rapid; shut so that my very thoughts met with rebound and

struck again my own breast, I would have given half my life for a gallop over long, flat sands. The table-talk, with its hints of the Orient, had fanned the embers to a flame; my blood seemed to pour like some fierce torrent against my pulse; at each glance that sought to reach a distance, the hills opposed their opaque wall; included and restrained, I felt myself in prison with all their weight on my soul. My heart beat in my throat, I drew my breath like fire.

"Eos," I said, "I shall go to the East."

"I thought you would," was all she replied, gathering up the reins.

"There is nothing left me here," I continued; "the great rivers, prairies, everglades, I have sucked them all dry. I may go on with endless repetitions till we die. Besides, they have no storied sanctity, the pyramids do not begin nor the blameless Ethiopians end them. My eye craves leagues of interminable extent and stillness, distant air tremulous above burning lands, where vast stretches are compressed in one indefinable line as sky and earth meet, light intense and overflowing with positive vitality—strong enough to sting faint eyes to death. I am weary of undulations, heights that I can overtop, intervals whose boundaries I know—I long for level immeasurability. It cannot be a thought of elephantine caverns, or ruined lauras, temple, or sphinx; it is the wide horizon, the fathomless azure, the limitless sand, heat, and languor, and life. I am in fetters!" I exclaimed. "Invention smothered, expression checked; I cannot breathe this air; I must go, Eos, I must go!"

"Yes," said Eos; "but it is so long."

"So long! What lengthens our time there more than here?"

"Then I, also—can I go?"

"Can? Must! After all, Eos, it is to paint that I go to the East—and without you? I might as well paint without daylight."

"But your heats, your languors—I shall die—I am not strong; I nearly dissolved in Florida, you know."

When had Eos objected to any project so urged by me, before, and objected on such grounds? I turned and took her bridle.

"You are thinking of Vespasia," I said. "I was not. I never cared for the woman, but for her influences. Her East is far beyond, moreover, swarthier skies are there, and its shores are laved by more

southern seas. It is unlikely that we shall meet. Yet fancy, Eos! if we should, how splendid the picture: white dromedaries, and red saddle-cloths, and the face of Vespasia, from her airy throne, flashing by us in the wilderness. So the enchantress Queen Labe might journey from the secret Nile source to the city of the great Magiana!"

Swift and deft beyond all other women, she completed our preparations in season for the next steamer; and suddenly, one day, all my dreams were accomplished, for we touched the shores of Africa.

We remained, during the winter, for purposes of research and acclimation, within the precincts of the old historic town—alien and fantastic—that received us. I wished, also, to take the plains in their utmost ardor; meanwhile, I was not idle. With the spring, we obtained a convoy and began our Arab life. When my foot touched the stirrup, when my horse first bounded beneath my heel, when some city—whose strange, sweet name savored of dates, and palm-wine, and "lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon"—veiled itself behind us, and leagues and leagues away and around spread the glimmering sheets, when I beheld that deep line of perpetual flight whose profound color amassed that of so many horizons, when for the first time I found the life I had sought—the bivouac, the siesta, the journeying by early stars—far from experiencing the exhilaration I had foreseen, I felt myself utterly satisfied and at rest. But, in truth, so far from rest, the state in which I was resembled that swift revolution of bodies in which they appear to be motionless: it was the very acme of unrest. Nothing surprised me in all that was so new; my very array occasioned me no hinderance, it seemed as if I had never worn another, picturesque and varied in all gay shades, effeminate and light as wrappings of air; accustomed to and demanding luxury, the simplicity of this life became at once mine, the primitive manners charmed me, the coarse fare contented me. In the night, the Arabs circled round the dying fire made groups where *chiaro-oscuro* could do no more; in the day, we crossed the track of some kindred party, or exchanged salutes with a parcel of French chasseurs, or encountered the great half-yearly caravan, defiling straight along the pathless waste, resplendent in arms, gorgeous in color, flut

tering in fringe, and scarf, and banner, and snatching the breath from the lips with its clamor, and swiftness, and grace. Sometimes many successive halts were made near wells of fresh, sweet water, or at other times the provision, tepid and rank, carried in the skins, sufficed us for days; to me, even this was almost welcome, and joyfully remembered as a portion of the wild delight of the life. Eos, pillowed and canopied aloft on her mattress, uttered no complaint when perishing of thirst, never murmured at the heat or the jolting gait of her camel, she retreated farther under her coverings, and when the cry ran along the line, leaned forth feebly in the hot quiet to draw strength from the yet distant oasis, whose palm-plume was cut upon the azure like a gem. Later, with the softness, the sudden nights that fell without twilight, the stars that hung great and glowing from their vaults of crystalline darkness, in the gloom, the coolness, the shelter of tamarisk-thicket, and breath of rose-laurel, she became refreshed and enlivened, and appeared once more airy and light-hearted as when in youth. How should I have known that in that dreadful sun, those scorching winds, she suffered so? She never told me, and my own keen enjoyment flushed me too fully to allow perception of any pain in the world.

Thus we journeyed. We halted in strange cities of the desert, till then unguessed; we took up our march again from ruins over which the restless sand had blown for centuries; all the way began to assume a new aspect, vague, unnatural, almost demoniacal. As we went, the great monumental camels, lost from wandering tribes, strange, sad beasts that seem the relics of some primeval era, came and surveyed us, standing gaunt, and stolid, and stony, and starved, between us and the sky; the little salamanders twisted and slipped among the burning sands; hot exhalations rose and maddened the animals; the sirocco played fearful fantasies in our brains; the flying lines, the alluring distances, buried themselves in mocking mirage; the water-courses became dry; the sun withered the eye that looked abroad; the summer heats beset us.

Our guides, who regarded everything as a matter of course, sought shelter and sleep. Eos, every limb flaccid, every nerve unstrung, drooped weaker and fainter, with no word, at last, even for

me, with imperceptible breath, and nothing but a fluttering pulse to tell the life within her. When the night came, all retook courage. As for me, I did not need it: I was in a state of inexhaustible well-being; I was bathed in the lustre of these overflowing heavens, I drank the divine melancholy of infinite distance, I was penetrated with warmth and satiated with light.

One day, just before the noon halt, there suddenly rose upon our vision a small caravan, rose from no one knew where, since in the desert, owing perhaps to space, such sights come and go like ephemera. It consisted of a pack-camel, whose driver urged it along at intervals with a peculiarly shrill song, and following, an Arab horseman, the trappings of purple and burnished silver glowing in the sun, and a dun-colored dromedary. From a seat of sumptuous cushions, high embossed, on the latter, a figure, all in white, bent, lifted aside its veil, and a face, golden in the noonlight, and with the sinister contrast of emerald eyes, flashed upon me. It was the face of Vespasia. The whole passed at a rapid pace, and became lost in the depths of the desert. Shortly afterward, we paused, and the little bivouac slept silent in siesta. While they rested, I had been sketching, for I allowed nothing to escape me, neither the hooded viper with his angry hue, in the patch of grass, nor the scorpion writhing from sight, nor an ostrich flying before the wind of his speed, with all his plumes spread and dancing. At last I entered the tent and lay down. For a moment I pressed my hand upon my eyes, a sudden darkness, edged with splendor, followed, then shooting gleams, and rings, and fiery spires. I opened them in the soft demi-shade of the tent; the light was intolerable. I was alarmed.

"Eos," I said, "I can scarcely see, I am dazzled. We must remain encamped here till I recover; it would not be pleasant to be left in the dark, you know," and I laughed as I spoke.

Eos lifted her languid head, put back the hair, brought her dressing-case nearer after an effort, and wetting a handkerchief in some cool ointment there, crept toward me and bound it about my eyes. Then she drew my head upon her bosom, and I fell asleep. When I awoke, it was with a sharp exclamation and then a laugh. My difficulty had vanished with rest. I saw Eos near the lifted hangings,

and Alain bending over me. He had been with us in the winter, and had counted upon meeting us frequently during our travel. He was out with skirmishers, in pursuit of fragments of certain rebellious tribes. They lingered and took the evening meal with us.

Alain was no longer genial; on the contrary, as sardonic as I had ever at any time seen him, and now and then giving way to a savage sentence. At length his companions gave notice of departure. Alain rose and bade Eos good-night; I stepped outside with him.

"You are at your old tricks again!" said he abruptly, as we stood alone a moment. I did not understand him. "Eos is dying now in good earnest."

I was startled, and then remembered his habit. "Eos experiences lassitude from the heat," I replied, "nothing more. I have nearly finished my studies; we shall return, and all will be well."

Slightly soothed by my calmness, "Heaven grant it!" said he. "She is thinner than a shadow, in this accursed land where there are no shadows! You have killed her, but no one can hang you for it!" Before I could reply, he strode to his horse, mounted, and fled like an arrow to rejoin his fellows.

At the tent-door stood Eos; I took her in my arms and wandered up and down the place, once a green island in the sea of sand, now parched and withered. I told her of my success, I talked of what swayed my thoughts, I bade her have yet a few days' patience. Perhaps the sight of Alain had reanimated her, perhaps my unusual treatment; she slipped, at length, from my grasp and walked beside me, and grew gay; now she ran a few paces in advance, now came back and hung over my hand; she sang broken tunes, bits of homesick airs, twittering and chirping, as I said, like a bird at dawn.

"Alain has teased you," said she at length. "He thinks me ill, I know; but I am perfectly well, only tired. And seeing Alain was like going home."

"We will go soon, Eos; you shall be there before the last harebells are faded, for what would the year be unless I saw their blue deepen the blue of your eyes?"

"Don't speak of home!" cried Eos, bursting into a sudden passion of tears, clinging to me and speaking through her sobs. "Don't speak of home! Of those days! It breaks my heart to think of them!"

"Eos!" I said in surprise, "do you regret it so unhappily?"

"No, no, I am not unhappy! I am most blest, because you love me better than you ever did before; but once in a while all that rises, and I perish with longing."

"Dear child," I said, smoothing the fair, flying hair from her forehead, "you shall go to-morrow, if you will, I can easily find you escort, and then remain till my work is done, without you."

"Could you?" asked Eos, drying her tears. "But I could not; where you are is my home away. I am sorry I have been so naughty—a hindering little thing, a weak and silly little wife!"

We lingered in silence a moment, to breathe the soft, warm night, to feel the gentle air sighing in the tamarisks, to see the great jewelry of heaven that every night spread its brilliant net above the desert—sapphire, and chrysolite, and ruby, and beryl. As we went in, Eos pointed with her white finger at one star, just above the horizon, red as a drop of blood ready to fall.

Early, under the awfully white sheen of a desert moon, the tents were struck, and we were on our way again. There was all the awakening cheer of the morning—the neighing horses, protesting camels, the stir of equipage, tinnabulation of bells, and cries of Arabs. The heavens bleached, a stain like that from some ruddy and enormous blossom dyed the east, the shadows lengthened, rosy light welled up and filled the great hollow of the sky; there were no clouds, no pomp, nothing but intense lustre and overpowering heat.

I had gradually fallen behind the others, as here and there appeared subjects for my pencil, and had lost them entirely from view, since I liked much to find myself so unimpeded and utterly alone, trusting the instinct of my horse to recover the train on occasion. Nothing could equal the profound hush; it seemed as if the vast extent of stillness swallowed every noise into itself, as the sea closes over dross.

While this thought passed through my mind, my horse suddenly pricked his ears and quivered under my hand, throwing back his head with swollen nostril and clustered veins, and rolling a fiery eyeball about; he appeared to listen intently, standing crisp-maned, and with the stiffened muscular action of a

bronze. In a moment, I heard a long, low note winding from the right—a signal of alarm. I touched him with the spur, folded my implements as we went, and galloped in its direction.

The train had already ceased progress, and had encircled the women in a hollow square. Sheik Ibrahim, meeting me, assured me that there were indisputable signs of an enemy, that he had suspected it for two or three days, but judged that the presence of the French, within such short distance, would be a sufficient safeguard, and therefore had said nothing. I remonstrated with him on his posture of defence, urging that it invited attack. He replied it was well known that bands hostile to his own tribe patrolled the desert, and it was singular we had already met none of sufficient force to assail us, and that I should soon see if his precautions were vain.

Far from terror, I found Eos exhilarated and trembling with excitement; her hand lay in mine like ice, and her eyes were fixed on a distant and increasing point. My glance followed hers, and before long I could plainly detect the glitter of spearheads, the flash of sunshine on mounted weapons, floating pennons, and a mingled splendor of color, while a strangely discordant, yet thrilling music announced no peaceful errand. Our horsemen pranced up and down the line, their eyes sparkling, their scarfs streaming, with difficulty restraining themselves from hurling a shower of spears at their assailants.

An hour's waiting, and they were near enough to exchange defiance; a lance leaped out and fell at my feet; then, without a word's warning, a volley of musketry, and the impetuous charge. For a moment, all thought of defence abandoned me, as I found myself in the midst of the *mêlée*, with its great, leaping steeds, its tossing kaftans, its purple, and scarlet, and gold, its irate motion, and gesture, and shrilling trumpet-peals, its flaming eyes, and the one lithe figure that flashed to and fro, mercurial and savage, among the swords, ever insinuating nearer—in the next, a blind instinct seized me, and the warlike fury.

I do not know how the little battle fell; our enemy exceeded us thrice; I can easily imagine that their certainty of victory already dashed us with defeat. I shook a hand from my shoulder, felt it again, turned and saw Eos, who had slipped

from her nest, grasping a rusty old yataghan, and replete with spirit.

"Alain!" she cried, "Alain!"

And deliverance, with the French *tirailleurs*, was upon us. The hostile party swerved, broke precipitately and fled; the lithe figure, which I had remarked before, alone wheeled back upon us, in a wide detour, poised suddenly in its career, and leaning on one stirrup from the saddle, dashed aside white burnous and violet turban-scarf, and, under the meteor of the uplifted sword-blade, I caught again that sinister dazzle of blazing leopard eyes. I had but time to fling Eos behind me, when the blow descended, and sheared a portion of her dress. As instantly the balance was restored, and the figure swept on, but not before I saw the long gleam of a *tirailleur's* polished barrel raised in the sun, and swiftly as it fled a swifter foe fled after. I shut my eyes, but I must have felt the bound, the reel, the headlong plunge, the dragging stirrup, till a second shot felled the horse with its rider.

"Yes," said Alain, a little later, when he joined us, "the very tribe we hunt! Well routed, too."

"Among them, *effendi*," said Ibrahim, "was an adventuress, who certainly purchased their favor with immense treasure. Their defeat is no less than a miracle of God, a blow for charging in mad noon at command of a woman! Dogs, and sons of dogs! God willed it; she lies there dead!"

Tender to the friend, inexorable to the enemy, with the one savage trait of his nature, Alain extended his hand to Eos.

"You can set your heel upon her head!" he said.

Eos flung him a glance like the blue light shed from the swallow's wing, and clung unreasonably to me.

I wonder now why she loved me, why, rather, she did not hate me! I had occasioned her only distress, I gave her no joy, no rest. Too sure it is that human attractions and repulsions are as invisible as potent.

This affair in no wise hurried our movements; we felt, henceforth, much safer, like those who have suffered a contagious illness to be suffered but once. I lingered farther from the camp, prolonged our stages, wrought up the hints afforded me, tried my effects in the face of what they sought to accomplish, imbibed the warmth

and radiance like a fruit of the tropics, and felt myself constantly more affluent. But while I made such revelry of every day, to Eos they brought torture; the reaction from the enthusiasm and shocks of the fray prostrated her, the heats still wrung away her vitality, the very sands became loathsome in her eyes; lifted from one arm to another, she had that horror of touching them with her foot that one has of treading on a grave; she seemed to fear, perpetually, the sight of those jewel-eyes, that trailing, viscous length, those splendid dyes, sliding among the golden grains—frequently she seemed fascinated and forced to seek for them; the skirmish was every night re-enacted in her dreams; she woke with the curve of the descending weapon and the glare of that envenomed gaze before her face, her sleep was a shivering nightmare—finally, she ceased to sleep at all. But all these things I never thought of then—blinder than now. And so my slow murder was accomplishing.

At length the summer was over, the term of Sheik Ibrahim's service expired, I turned my back upon the desert—not forever, as I hoped—bade farewell to these fierce rays that had ravished me from myself, to this feast of lustre, to these long lines that shared the grandeur of infinity; I awoke from my debauch of light, I left the great solace of sun, and solitude, and space, and silence. I threaded again the dark, narrow bazaars, and again, with Eos, found myself on level calms of blue water; and thus, as it were, by gentle gradations came back to my old life.

At sea, Eos lay upon the deck, placid and peaceful, yet motionless; but people were always sick at sea, I said. Once at home, and reinstated in our old ways, I looked for her recovery, and looked in vain; it became necessary to regard her as a confirmed invalid. That is the case with all American women, I said. I found her attendance, then missed her unflinching services that I never recognized, and wondered if I could not anticipate my own wants. She lay, during the greater portion of the day, on a couch at the lower window of the room where I painted, and now I worked with a will and energy I had never known before. I rose at day-break to contemplate my progress; I scarcely allowed myself time for my daily food; I took no recreation: it was recreation enough, it was complete joy, thus

to reproduce the only summer, I declared, in which I had ever lived. I combined, and eliminated, and heightened, there was no strength possible to my palette which I did not demand, I exhausted the secrets of my art, my eyes grew heated with fixed labor, my breath, itself, paused on my lips. Eos, as intent as I, watched its growth with a fever in her cheek, and, in her feeble way, grew blithe at any powerful success. She used to follow me with her glance; now and then, yet seldom, she beckoned me to leave all and kiss her, she was so weak that she scarcely ever attempted to walk; except to carry her from room to room, to obey her rare requests, I was too absorbed to be more than remotely sensible of her existence. But she—she seemed to concentrate the love of long life into those few months. Once, when my sight was fatigued, I sat and shaded it with my hand; she thought me confused in color, and remembered her old remedy, rose, reached the piano, and slowly unwound a chain of clear, fine chords, a rill of melody stealing through them to be lost in closing chords finer and sweeter, the rich sediment that had remained in her memory from some imposing Mass. The sound, so unusual now, startled me.

"Eos!" I exclaimed, "what has happened? Are you well?"

"You know the wick flashes up, when the flame is extinguished, if the day is to be fine to-morrow," she said, and laughed.

Then her face grew still, her eye wistful, she staggered and fell, and I bore her to the couch again.

So the winter skimmed away, it grew to be late in the spring, and I could look forward to the completion of my work. I did not think, then, of its pompous parade, its triumphal march from town to town, of its throng of lovers, of its world-wide fame; I saw and felt only its beauty, and needed no other recompense. There lay the desert before me again, its one moment of dawn, when the sands blanched, the skies bleached, and the opposite quarter dreamed of rosy suffusion, to cast it again yet more faintly on the white dromedary, and the white-wrapped Arab beside him. They, and their long, pallid shadows falling from the east, alone taught me the ineffable solitude and hush; beyond them, I found again the lengthening lines, the hints of fuller light, slow and fine detail, desert compressed within desert, space and immensity dar-

ingly shut on a canvas. There was the sparkle of the sterile stretch, the wide air emptied by its torrid stings, the eternal calm and peace—the melancholy for one, the rapture for another. There was the soul of summer shed, older, and more mysterious, and sadder than the sea, fresh made with every morn in vigor and hope—the work was worth its price!

One day I waited merely for the artisans with the frame. I went, gayly, and sat down on Eos' couch. I took her in my arms—she was lighter than any child—laid her head on my shoulder, and talked to her a few moments of my hopes and certainties. Then we were silent. She lifted her hand and placed it on my forehead.

"How glad I am that you love me as you do," she said. "Other love might regard me as a separate thing, seek my ease or pleasure aside, but you have made and felt me a part of yourself. I am glad, darling, and I thank God for you!"

She lifted her still beautiful head, and pressed her lips to mine, long, fervently, and as if she wished I should drink the last drops of her life—then sank back.

I heard the men on the stairs. I dropped her among her cushions, drew the screen, and admitted them. That was soon done. Then there were a few touches yet to be given, some delicate strokes, a shadow to deepen, a light to intensify, and the radiant thing stood perfect before me.

"Eos, my work is ended!" I cried. "There is nothing more to do!"

I stepped back; I scanned the thing intently, I turned, bewildered; and, at a sharp sting, drew my fingers down my lids. At the touch, a spear, as of some Northern Light, leapt across my vision, then murk darkness, and creeping over that my picture, the sands of the desert, forever and forever stretched before my eyes.

"Who has drawn the shades?" I asked. "Have I worked till night? Eos, are you here?"

I moved forward; the bell from a neighboring church-tower struck the hour of noon; my hand passed through the open window and clutched empty air, groped back again and lay on features bathed in vapid chill.

Truly, there was nothing more to do, in all my life long, nothing more to do! Night had fallen at noon. I was blind, and Eos was dead.